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City Document.—No. 13.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS
OF
HIS HONOR JOHN S. SLEEPER,
MAYOR OF ROXBURY,
DELIVERED BEFORE
THE CITY COUNCIL,
MONDAY EVENING, DEC. 27, 1858.



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN.

ROXBURY:
L. B. & O. E. WESTON, PRINTERS, GUILD ROW.
1858.

City of Roxbury.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, Dec. 27, 1858.

ORDERED, That two thousand copies of the Address of His Honor the Mayor, be printed, for the use of the City Council and distribution to the citizens.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk.*

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, December 27, 1858.

Alderman LELAND offered the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the thanks of this Board be presented to His Honor the MAYOR, for the faithful and impartial manner with which he has presided over its deliberations, during the Municipal year now about to close.

Resolved, That by his experience in municipal affairs, by industry and by careful attention to the preparation and transaction of business, he has rendered valuable service to our fellow-citizens, lightened our labors, and promoted the interests of the City.

Resolved, That we trust that the gentlemanly courtesy which has at all times marked his intercourse with the members, has been filly acknowledged by the uninterrupted harmony of our meetings.

Resolved, That in his retirement from an office, perplexing in its nature, and involving labor rarely appreciated, we tender him the compliments of the season, and our kind wishes for his welfare and happiness.

The Common Council having expressed a wish to be present during the delivery of the Mayor's Valedictory Address, a Convention of the two branches was held in the Council Chamber, when the MAYOR responded to the foregoing resolves in the following

ADDRESS:

GENTLEMEN,—

The resolutions you have just adopted, embodying the kindest sentiments towards myself, entitles you to my warmest thanks—and the more so, as I do not regard them as a mere matter of courtesy, a sort of official ceremonial, that may mean any thing or nothing, but as the genuine transcript of your feelings; and as such, I feel not only grateful but proud.

The office of Mayor of Roxbury, although an honorable one, is an arduous and responsible one, and surrounded with difficulties, which *you* can well understand. The duties of the office are of a character deeply affecting the prosperity of our City, and the interest and happiness of the inhabitants; and if I have been able, during the past twelve months, to render services of value to my fellow-citizens, it is to you the credit should be given. You, gentlemen, have, one and all, encouraged me in my efforts, advised me in my perplexities, and supported me in my resolutions.

Representing the different sections of the City, and all the political parties of the day, you have met at this Board, on an elevated platform, free from sectional or political bias, animated by a sincere wish to promote the public good, and administer the government wisely and well. It is undoubtedly owing to this cause, to this deep-seated *mainspring* of your actions, that union and harmony have presided over our deliberations, to an extent seldom experienced in any municipal assembly. And it is owing to this fidelity to principle: this devotion to duty: that the citizens of Roxbury express satisfaction at the manner in which the business of the government has been transacted.

Roxbury is a city increasing rapidly in population and wealth. Its convenient and healthy location, and other manifest advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants, render it a desirable residence. Important and expensive improvements of various kinds, and especially in our streets and highways, are thus rendered necessary, in order to meet the wants of an age in which "progress" is the watch-word; and to correspond with the healthy growth and increasing importance of our City.

These improvements during the present year have been numerous. They have drawn heavily on the time, and deeply exercised the care, judgment, and attention of

members of the City Government. I can refer only to a few.

Material alterations have been made in the City Hall, by which commodious rooms and offices have been provided for the different departments — an improvement which has long been needed, and urgently pressed year after year, on successive City Governments.

The basement story of the City Hall has been neatly fitted up and furnished for the head quarters of the Police — where the City Marshal holds his office; and where an officer is stationed to respond to any call that may be made on that department.

A new and convenient school house, well constructed, and of an improved model, has been erected near Tremont Street, to meet the pressing demands for further school accommodations in that section of the City.

A neat and substantial edifice, built very properly of brick, and which may be regarded as an ornament to the City, has been erected at the junction of Warren and Dudley Streets, to take the place of the unsightly engine house, formerly occupied by two companies of the Fire Department.

Streets have been extensively repaired in different parts of the City: sidewalks have been constructed, edgestones set, gutters paved, crossing stones laid, and substantial culverts built or repaired.

Streets have also been widened. In Tremont Street land has been taken for that purpose during the year, amounting to 23,355 feet; and by an expenditure which may be regarded as moderate, compared with the benefits it would ensure, an important and continuous portion of that much-travelled public avenue can be immediately widened and finished off, to the proposed width of 80 feet, according to the prospective plan.

By the extension of Water (now Ruggles) Street from

Shawmut Avenue to Washington Street, a new and important avenue to the western part of the City has been opened, which will accommodate many people, and greatly contribute to the advantages of both sections of the City.

The completion of the new public highway, known as Shawmut Avenue, extending from the Boston boundary line to Washington Street; and the reconstruction of the "Dedham Turnpike," a work of vast magnitude, and of great importance to the inhabitants not only of Roxbury but of a large portion of Norfolk County, furnish important facilities for public travel, and must add materially to the value of property along the whole line of the road.

Resolves have been adopted, and the land taken, for widening and properly grading that part of Vernon Street, extending from Shawmut Avenue to Washington Street, a work which has been too long delayed, and which would have been *completed* the present season, were it not for the early and unexpected severity of the weather, which rendered necessary the postponement of any action until after the commencement of another year.

During the present year, a series of surveys have been made and facts ascertained, with a view to determine upon some general system of Sewerage—a subject of the greatest importance to the City, and the want of which is felt by every occupant of a dwelling house, and by every owner of a lot of land on which it is desirable to place one. The result of these investigations has been embodied in a Report, accompanied with various plans and profiles, giving the level of streets, and showing the practicability of establishing a thorough system of drainage and sewerage, whenever the citizens are ready to furnish the means.

Accompanying this Report is a Resolve, which was adopted by the City Council, recommending as one means of effecting this great object, an annual appropriation of a sum, not less than 10,000 dollars, which, it is believed, if

judiciously expended, together with reasonable assessments on abutters, will in a few years supply, to a great extent, an acknowledged want, and increase the prosperity of our City.

A plan has also been devised after much consideration, and unanimously adopted by the City Council, and the initiative step has been taken, for draining the low lands in Roxbury, between Webber and Northampton Streets, a section, the condition of which has for years been a reproach to our City, and which imperatively requires some immediate action, by which a noisome, unhealthy quagmire, dotted with pestilential pools, will be converted into a desirable site for valuable dwelling houses.

The Public Schools of Roxbury are at the present time in a good condition. The pupils at the last annual examination made an appearance, with which their teachers may well be proud. Owing to the increase of population, further expensive accommodations are even now required for Grammar School scholars. But there is a noble feeling on the part of the people in favor of sparing no pains or expense in the cause of education, but to make Roxbury, in this respect, equal at least to any city in the Commonwealth.

To these improvements and advantages, I may add the existence of an efficient system of Police: an orderly population, where mobs, riots or street affrays are unknown; a well organized Fire Department; lamps lighted with gas in nearly every street: and a regular, rapid, and cheap mode of conveyance to and from Boston, by means of the Metropolitan Railroad.

It is also gratifying to know that the expenses of the government, including the cost of the important improvements to which I have alluded, will be met, with no probability of adding to the standing City Debt, beyond the loan which was negotiated at the beginning of the year,

for defraying the extension of Water Street, and the construction and repairing of Shawmut Avenue.

While these and other public improvements have been made or suggested by the City Government, the enterprise and energy of *individuals* have not been asleep. Even the late revulsion in the great business world, which shook to the foundation many prosperous communities, and paralyzed for a time the hand of enterprise, has passed gently over our City. Individuals have suffered — but the march of progress has not been stayed.

Streets have been laid out in different sections: low lands have been drained; and hills and ledges removed; and valuable locations for pleasant and desirable residences, have been thus, as it were, created. Real estate has experienced no depression in value, and buildings of every character have increased to an extent within the present year, which has probably no parallel in the history of our City.

Since the first of January last, it is ascertained by careful investigation, that dwelling houses have been erected in this City, of a class costing 3000 dollars and upwards, to the number of 86 ; while 135 buildings have been erected within the same period, which cost each more than 800 dollars and less than 3000 dollars. The total value of these buildings cannot be less than half a million of dollars, and in many cases, they have materially increased the value of property in their vicinity.

These facts, and others which might be adduced, prove beyond cavil, that Roxbury possesses within her limits all the elements of a rich, populous and flourishing City; and that the citizens of Roxbury, managing their own affairs, and living under a government of their choice, enjoy blessings for which they should be grateful to a benignant Providence. Not only is the present condition of our City bright, but it shines brilliantly in perspective: it is rich in

the promise of the future, unless we should mistrust our own wisdom in governing ourselves, voluntarily sacrifice our independence; and for the sake of an experiment, pass the wand of authority into the hands of others.

Gentlemen, having been three times called to this office by my fellow-citizens; and having taken my place each time unpledged to any one, and untrammelled by party ties: free to act as my conscience and judgment might direct, I have aimed to do *right*; and, on this miniature scale, in the dying words of the venerable and good Garrison, "carry out the true principles of government," irrespective of party, sect, section, clique, or individual. And although the duties of the office have been various, complicated and responsible, and sometimes onerous and vexatious, yet the cares and perplexities have been more than counterbalanced by a consciousness of being able to render particular services to some of my fellow-citizens, and to subserve the general interest of the whole.

The broad financial policy which it has been my *aim* to adopt, was on the one hand to avoid a lavish expenditure of the public moneys for objects of doubtful utility — and, on the other, to steer clear of that system of *parsimony*, which dwarfs the institutions of a City or a State, arrests the hand of enterprise, and contemns the reasonable wants of a growing community.

If we look back some eight or ten years, and contrast the condition of Roxbury at that time with its condition now, we shall the more readily realize and appreciate the improvements which have since taken place, and the increased advantages, which the inhabitants now enjoy. Much has been done, and well done, by successive administrations, and *much has been left undone*, which will put in requisition the acknowledged ability and skill of our successors.

In consequence of the magnitude of certain undertakings the present year, to which I have referred, prudence seemed to require that some expensive improvements that were obviously proper in themselves, and even the consideration of others, should be postponed to another year. Among these objects may be mentioned, the paving of Dudley Street, from the Post Office to Eliot Square; — the extensive repairing of Centre Street, and construction of sidewalks through that street, from Eliot Square to the Bridge: the repairing of the southern portion of Parker Street, and construction of sidewalks on the same: the widening of Washington Street, fronting the Sumner estate, according to the prospective plan established by a former City Government; — the grading and opening of Hunneman Street, thus completing a straight and commodious avenue, from Washington Street, over Norfolk Avenue, to Dorchester: — the alteration of the direction of Heath Street, at its junction with Parker Street, by carrying it directly across Stony Brook and the Providence Railroad, to Highland Street, thus greatly improving the character of the road, and remedying the evils attending the present dangerous railroad crossing, which have been long complained of; — the extension of Plymouth Street to Dudley Street; — and the opening of a new and important highway, extending from Longwood Avenue across agricultural grounds to Parker Street, thence to Tremont Avenue.

The consideration of these important undertakings, and of others, perhaps of equal importance, must be bequeathed as a legacy to our successors.

Gentlemen, while I tender you my sincere acknowledgements for the assistance you have rendered me during the year, I will take this opportunity to confess my obligations to the members of the Common Council, and other mem-

bers of the City Government; — to the City Treasurer and the City Clerk, for their faithful services, which have lightened my labors, and entitle them to the confidence of every good citizen: and also to the heads of the different departments, for *their* fidelity in the performance of their various duties.

Gentlemen, we have often conferred together during the year which is rapidly passing away, in relation to the interests of Roxbury. The time is approaching — is near at hand — when we shall separate, to meet in this connection, no more. But allow me to hope that the friendly relations we have cultivated at this Board, will not be severed, but will be continued at other times, and under other auspices.

Allow me to assure you, that I fully appreciate and reciprocate the kind feelings expressed in the resolutions which have just been read; that you have my best wishes for success in your future undertakings in this life, and for your happiness, both here and hereafter.

JOHN S. SLEEPER.



